

# Theatres and The New Plays

## 'A Bill of Divorcement' for the Admirers of the Drama

Clemence Dane's Drama, Skilfully Written and Acted, a Theatrical Treat—Henri Bernstein's 'The Claw' Written Without Too Close Scrutiny of Life.

By LAWRENCE REAMER.

CLEMENCE DANE seems to have named her play "A Bill of Divorcement" on the lucas anon lucendo principle. There is really nothing important in the phases of this interesting drama that treat of divorce. Of course there is a note on the programme reminding the audience that it must be supposed that a law granting divorce for insanity has been passed in England. The presence of the note suggests of course a fairy story in which something highly improbable and depending on a future event is about to happen. But it is what is happening with the younger generation just at this minute which is all there is that is most valuable in the play which Charles Dillingham has brought to the Cohan Theatre.

It is not the long period of mental derangement which has sent the hero from the battle field to the asylum for sixteen years that really makes "A Bill of Divorcement" tragedy. It is the fact that his sister was insane and that the blight notoriously exists in the family. His wife gets her divorce and goes with the man she is promised to after her long period of loneliness. But the daughter dismisses her betrothed. She knows that the blight must not be passed on to another generation. She will sacrifice her hope of happiness rather than ask of her husband that he forego the joys of paternity.

Nor, on the other hand, should the mother, who has assuredly paid the penalty of her innocent marriage to a man in whose family there is this hereditary taint suffer further retributions. She shall marry the man who loves her. She shall escape from the society of this nervous, still ejaculatory, uncertain arrival from the insane ward as well as from the oppressively religious atmosphere of the household. The door opens for her. As she passes into the sunlight of the snowy Christmas day, however, it slams shut on the girl bravely watching over her father, while there is above them both the black cloud of madness.

There are no hysterics in Miss Dane's play. It is quite the best written dramatic work of the year, if one except "The Circle." Its premises, while the author may have taken them ready made to her purposes, are followed with rigorous logic. Its action does not slide smugly along with the easy mechanism of the well made play, nor does it skid like a veteran taxi on the wet asphalt in the manner of so much modern stage writing, especially when it happens to be laden with a thesis. The drama moves with the naturalness of life. It is an uncommonly fine specimen of playwriting, a fact which probably does not interest in the slightest degree the average theatregoer. But it happens to be of absorbing interest in every scene, which is much more to the point.

Miss Dane's management of the scene in which the young girl drives away for the sake of his own happiness the boy of her choice is an example of the skill discernable in every scene. She does not weep or go into hysterics, or rave about the barrier which may stand in the way of their marriage. Petulantly she begins a lovers' quarrel about another girl, a friend of his sister. "They always are," as she answers. By degrees she so deeply wounds his self-esteem that he throws himself out of the house.

In anguish she stands at the door making as if to call him back. He does open the door. Then another rather cruel flout sends him away forever, leaving a broken but a courageous heart behind him. By such artistic indirection is the story told.

Two Uneventful Acts.

His method has become rather thoroughly standardized. Two more or less uneventful acts preceded the "big scene." Whether this be in "The Thief" or in "The Claw," it is of interminable length. By mere number of words, the audience is gradually brought into a state of excitement which is capable of analysis of revealing a certain relation to intense ennui.

The speech in which Lionel Barrymore pleads and reasons with his enemy is killing long. Yet, after all, it might be less effective were the audience put through a less thrilling ordeal of the French rhetorical. The delivery of the language is an art in itself which is unknown in our modern theatre. Mr. Barrymore perhaps does it as well as any of our actors. The French public, nevertheless, must have an easier time under these outbursts than our public. In the first place, the native audience does not have to listen to a translation as New Yorkers must.

There is an undeniable power in mere extent just as there is in stupidity. Probably there would not be such passionate outbursts of approval after these characteristic speeches if they were shorter. It might not be just to say that the spectators are relieved when they come to an end. Yet there is an element of gratitude in the thunder that follows one of these verbal geyser—even when it is spoken by Mr. Barrymore.

Last week brought no fortune to the pornographic drama. Two specimens seem to indicate that the public has had its share of plays of this kind. The year has not so far been rich in its harvest to the theatre managers. They have had lean pickings. One of the usual remedies for such a condition is to offer strong fare. If the public is shy at nibbling the usual lollipops, reach down into the stock and bring up something strong. Then we will see the Boobytanlac reacting to the increased pressure.

Unluckily, the pornographic play is popular. It is a familiar and soothing explanation that, after all, the moral drama in the long run is the most profitable. At least one manager has made a fortune out of it. Since some of this is used in the performance of worthy plays, some of its taint may be gone. But assuredly some of it sticks. Were these products of the dramatist's imagination not good business investments there would no longer be the constant struggle to find a prosperous one.

George M. Cohan talked with the writer before he sailed about the question of the profits that these plays bring.

"There are other ways of getting money if you must have it," Mr. Cohan said. "Some men get it by going out with a club on dark nights. Others produce dirty plays and get the money in that way. After all, they take less chances than others."

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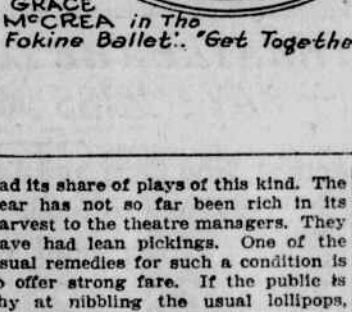
Miss DEVAH WORRELL in the "Greenwich Village Follies... Shubert



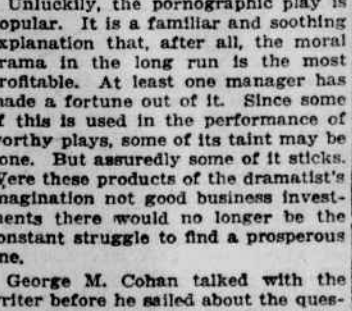
Miss ELEANOR PAINTER in "The Last Waltz" Century



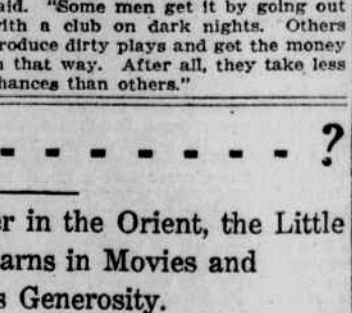
Miss GRACE MCKEE in "The Follies Ballet... Get Together"



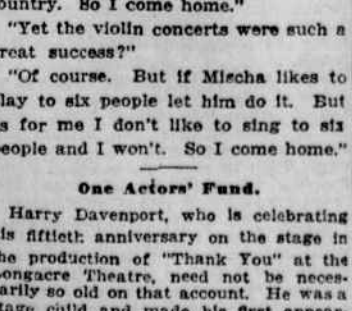
Miss LILLIAN ALBERTSON in "The Six Fifty" Hudson



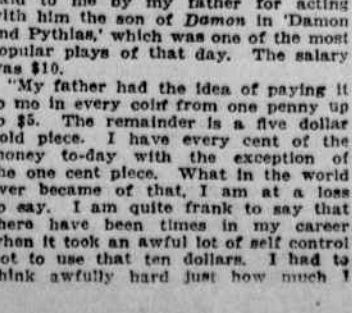
Miss ESTELLE WINWOOD in "The Circle" Selwyn



Miss GIPSY O'BRIEN in "The Right to Strike" Comedy



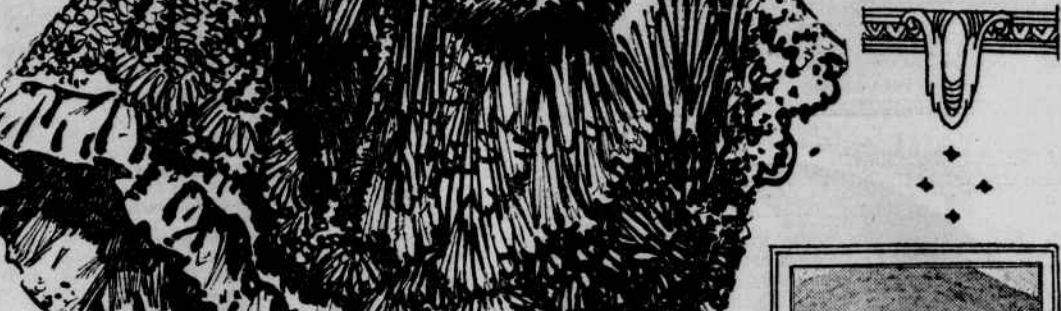
Miss TYRONE POWER in "The Wandering Jew" Knickerbocker



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Miss ANNE MEREDITH in "Bluebeard's Eighth Wife" Ritz



Miss TYRONE POWER in "The Wandering Jew" Knickerbocker



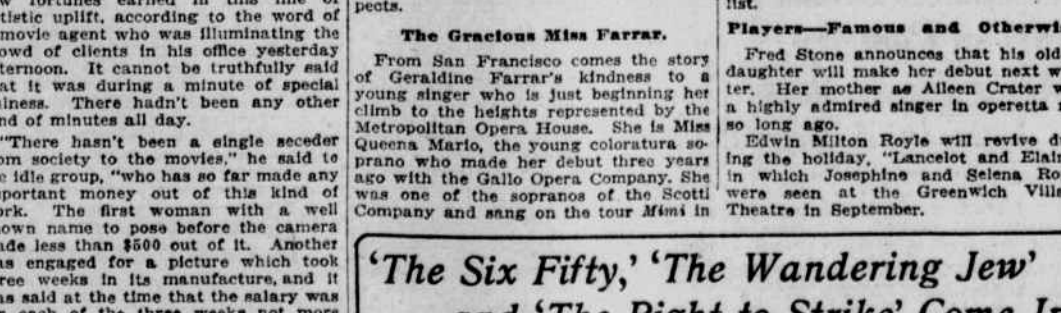
Miss TYRONE POWER in "The Wandering Jew" Knickerbocker



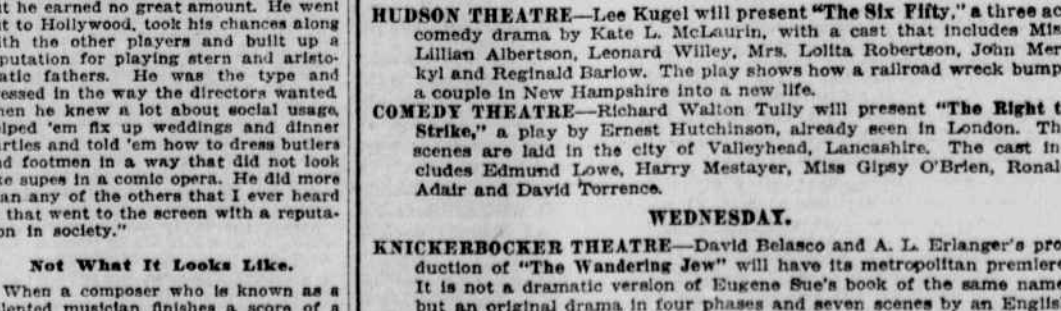
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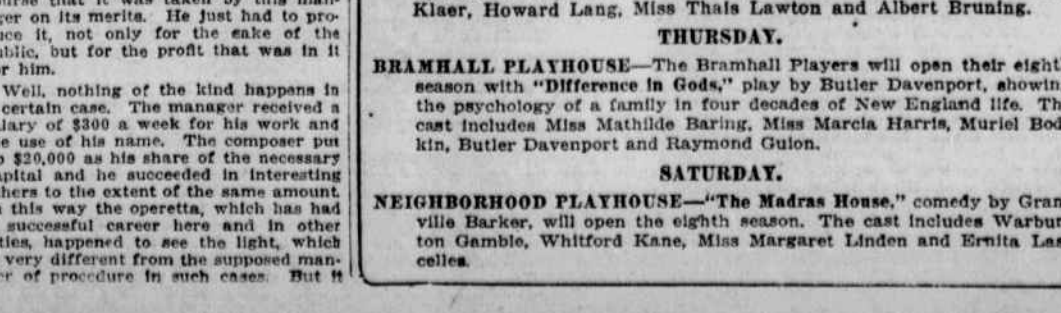
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## Did You Hear - - - - - ?

About the Singer and Fiddler in the Orient, the Little Money That Society Earns in Movies and of Miss Farrar's Generosity.

By LUCIEN CLEVELAND.

WHEN the distinguished prima donna distinguishes the Orient to sing she was almost a pioneer, although it was not so long afterward that a violinist also decided to try his artistic fortunes in the Far East. So the country enjoyed simultaneously the visit of two famous musical artists of the Western World.

The violinist met a friend on the street a few days after his return. Inquiry, of course, dealt with the tour in such a strange country.

"Don't ask me, really. I don't like to speak about it," modestly protested the musician. "I really can't, you know, without embarrassment."

"So bad as that, then?" murmured his companion, sympathetically.

"Bad! Why, of course not!" retorted the violinist. "It was wonderful. Sold out every time I played."

The contralto was by no means enthusiastic. She came home prematurely and listened with astonishment to the stories of the great success of the violinist.

"My father had the idea of paying it to me in every coin from one penny up to \$5. The remainder is a five dollar gold piece. I have every cent of the money to-day with the exception of the one cent piece. What in the world ever became of that, I am at a loss to say. I am quite frank to say that there have been times in my career when it took an awful lot of self control not to use that ten dollars. I had to think awfully hard just how much I

had in that case. One man did make a good living for several years, but he earned no great amount. He went out to Hollywood, took his chances along with the other players and built up a reputation for playing stern and aristocratic fathers. He was the type and dressed in the way the directors wanted. Then he knew a lot about social usage, helped 'em fix up weddings and dinner parties and told 'em how to dress butlers and footmen in a way that did not look like a super in a comic opera. He did more than any of the others that I ever heard of that went to the screen with a reputation in society."

Not What It Looks Like.

When a composer who is known as a talented musician finishes a score of a comic opera and it is set to the libretto of a skillful writer and a popular manager produces it, the public—the dear, dear and ignorant public—believes of course that it was taken by this manager on its merits. He just had to produce it, not for the sake of the public, but for the profit that was in it for him.

Well, nothing of the kind happens in a certain case. The manager received a salary of \$300 a week for his work and the use of his name. The composer put up \$20,000 as his share of the necessary capital and he succeeded in interesting others to the extent of the same amount. In this way the opera, which has had a successful career here and in other cities, happened to see the light, which is very different from the supposed manner of procedure in such cases. But it

happens more often than the public suspects.

The Gracious Miss Farrar.

From San Francisco comes the story of Geraldine Farrar's kindness to a young singer who is just beginning her climb to the heights represented by the Metropolitan Opera House. She is Miss Queens Mario, the young coloratura soprano who made her debut three years ago with the Gallo Opera Company. She was one of the sopranos of the Scotti Company and sang on the tour Miami

valued it as a souvenir. Yet I have it still—all but the one cent piece."

Millions in the Movies.

It is the conviction of many who set out to make a living that the cinema offers the easiest field. This is especially true of those who are willing to desert an exalted place in society to appear before the camera. Yet there have been few fortunes earned in this line of artistic uplift, according to the word of a movie agent who was illuminating the crowd of clients in his office yesterday afternoon. It cannot be truthfully said that it was during a minute of special goodness. There hadn't been any other kind of minutes all day.

"There hasn't been a single seceder from society to the movies," he said to the idle group, "who has so far made any important money out of this kind of work. The first woman with a known name to pose before the camera made less than \$500 out of it. Another was engaged for a picture which took three weeks in its manufacture, and it was said at the time that the salary was for each of the three weeks not more than \$50.

"La Boheme," as well as *Rosina*, and with Miss Farrar, *Nicola* in "Carmen." In San Francisco her success in the third act was so great that the audience recalled her repeatedly. She appeared with Miss Farrar. But it was evident that the listeners wanted to see her alone. Overheard by those in the wings was the voice of Miss Farrar urging her to take "a call" alone.

"But how could I, a beginner," Miss Mario was heard to say, "leave a great artist like you and take a call by myself?"

"They want you," Miss Farrar was heard to answer. "Go out alone, I have never known the time when I would stand in the way of the public."

Miss Mario had her little triumph and appeared again with Miss Farrar. She wrote a warm note of thanks to the famous diva and the answer of the star managed to get printed out West. How in the world do such things find their way into the newspapers? Miss Farrar not only wrote of her great admiration for the young soprano, but said she only awaited the day when she would be able to receive her into the happy family of the Metropolitan Opera House."

So there is one more dyed in the wool gerrylapper added to the already long list.

Players—Famous and Otherwise.

Fred Stone announces that his oldest daughter will make her debut next winter. Her mother, Alleen Crater was a highly admired singer in opera not so long ago.

Edwin Milton Royle will revive during the holiday, "Lancelot and Elaine" in which Josephine and Selena Royle were seen at the Greenwich Village Theatre in September.

MONDAY.

HUDSON THEATRE—Lee Kugel will present "The Six Fifty," a three act comedy drama by Kate L. McLaurin, with a cast that includes Miss Lillian Albertson, Leonard Willey, Mrs. Lolita Robertson, John Merriky and Reginald Barlow. The play shows how a railroad wreck bumps a couple in New Hampshire into a new life.

COMEDY THEATRE—Richard Walton Tully will present "The Right to Strike," a play by Ernest Hutchinson, already seen in London. The scenes are laid in the city of Valleyhead, Lancashire. The cast includes Edmund Lowe, Harry Mestayer, Miss Gipsy O'Brien, Ronald Adair and David Torrence.

WEDNESDAY.

KNICKERBOCKER THEATRE—David Belasco and A. L. Erlanger's production of "The Wandering Jew" will have its metropolitan premiere. It is not a dramatic version of Eugene Sue's book of the same name, but an original drama in four phases and seven scenes by an English writer, E. Temple Thurston, and has been played in London. The action of the piece is woven around the legendary character, doomed to terrestrial existence until Judgment Day. The cast will include Tyrone Power, Miss Helen Ware, Miss Belle Bennett, Miss Adele Kiser, Howard Lang, Miss Thais Lawton and Albert Bruning.

THURSDAY.

BRAMHALL PLAYHOUSE—The Bramhall Players will open their eighth season with "Difference in Gods," play by Butler Davenport, showing the psychology of a family in four decades of New England life. The cast includes Miss Mathilde Baring, Miss Marcia Harris, Muriel Bodkin, Butler Davenport and Raymond Guilan.

SATURDAY.

NEIGHBORHOOD PLAYHOUSE—"The Madras House," comedy by Granville Barker, will open the eighth season. The cast includes Warburton Gamble, Whitford Kane, Miss Margaret Linden and Ermita Lascelles.